

VZCZCXRO2938  
PP RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHMO #3576/01 3451515  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 101515Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1079  
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 003576

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/RUS AND WHA/CCA (DAVID MCFARLAND)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF THE  
LIBERTAD ACT

REF: A. STATE 126578  
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 3526  
[1](#)C. MOSCOW 1500

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) In response to reftel, GOR support for democracy and human rights in Cuba has been minimal. Both President Medvedev and Deputy PM Sechin have visited Cuba within the last six months, but the visits produced no major political or economic agreements. Despite these efforts to strengthen ties with Cuba, Russia's economic relations with Cuba remain limited. Russia provided humanitarian hurricane assistance to Cuba. END SUMMARY.

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Limited Democracy and Human Rights Efforts  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) We are not aware of any GOR action to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights, to condemn human rights abuses, or to support the development of civil society in Cuba.

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High Level Diplomatic Visits  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Following the APEC Summit in Peru in November, President Medvedev, accompanied by FM Lavrov, visited Cuba and met with President Raul Castro and former President Fidel Castro (Ref B). Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, who oversees the energy sector, has also visited Cuba four times within the last six months. During Sechin's August visit, he led a delegation of several Cabinet Ministers (including the Energy, Telecommunications, and Education and Science Ministers) and leading Russian businessmen, including Gazprom Deputy CEO Alexander Medvedev. None of these visits produced any meaningful agreements, either political or economic.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque visited Moscow in November. The visit also had little impact. Cuban President Raul Castro is expected to visit Moscow during the first quarter of 2009.

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Investment and Trade Relations  
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[1](#)5. (SBU) As noted above, President Medvedev's and Deputy PM

Sechin's visits to Cuba have produced few concrete agreements on economic cooperation. During Sechin's trip in August, he co-chaired a Russian-Cuban Intergovernmental Committee on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which discussed potential cooperation in energy, mining, transport, shipbuilding, agriculture, tourism, health care, communications and banking. There were no specific deals executed in any of these areas. In the past six months, the countries have signed several agreements in telecommunications, automobile production, nickel extraction, and oil and gas extraction, all of which provide for only general cooperation.

¶6. (SBU) Beyond these general agreements, Cuba has agreed to purchase a handful of Russian-made aircraft, and the Russian truck manufacturer Kamaz is reportedly in talks with Cuban officials about the possibility of opening a truck assembly factory in Cuba. Russia has also provided Cuba with a \$300 million dollar loan at a below-market rate of interest, on the condition that Cuba use the loan proceeds to purchase Russian goods and services. We are not aware of any GOR or Russian private sector participation in the November 3 Havana Trade Fair.

¶7. (SBU) In 2007, Russian-Cuban two-way trade totaled \$363 million. Bilateral trade exceeded \$207 million in the first half of 2008, an increase of almost 20% compared to the first half of 2007. Russia's principal exports to Cuba are aircraft, heavy machines and equipment. Cuba's principal exports to Russia are sugar, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and cigars.

MOSCOW 00003576 002 OF 002

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Humanitarian Assistance  
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¶8. (SBU) Russia was one of the first countries to send humanitarian aid to Cuba following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, reportedly sending a total of four planeloads with over 60 tons of humanitarian supplies in early September. During one of his visits to Cuba, Russian Deputy PM Sechin toured areas affected by the hurricanes, promised more Russian assistance, and noted the need to rebuild Cuba's electricity generation system.

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Exchange and Medical Programs  
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¶9. (SBU) Russian officials have made general statements about the potential for closer cooperation between Russia and Cuba in health care, including the possibility of greater pharmaceutical purchases from Cuba. Russian drug makers Pharmstandard and Pharmapark recently agreed with Cuba's Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnologies to cooperate on vaccine production in Russia.

RUBIN